

News from Ed Markey

United States Congress

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TSA TO RELAX RULES THAT PREVENT KNIVES AND OTHER DANGEROUS OBJECTS ON PLANES

Washington, DC – Representative Edward Markey (D-MA), a senior member of the Homeland Security Committee, today responded to a Washington Post report that the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) plans to permit airline passengers to carry scissors and other previously banned sharp objects aboard planes. Such objects were prohibited from carry-on baggage after it was determined that the 9/11 hijackers used box cutters as weapons to help carry out their deadly attacks. On August 18, 2005, Rep. Markey wrote to Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary Michael Chertoff to discourage DHS not to reverse its policy on prohibited carry-on objects such as scissors, small knives and other dangerous objects.

“TSA should be focused on shrinking the terrorist toolbox, not expanding the number of items that a terrorist could carry onboard. TSA’s plan to permit sharp objects such as knives on airplanes suggests a serious short-term memory loss that puts passengers and crew members at risk. Four years ago, we witnessed how terrorists can use common items to perpetrate devastating strikes against our country. This is the equivalent of handing back the box cutters to the 9/11 hijackers,” Rep. Markey said.

The Association of Flight Attendants has also objected to the revised provisions. “Under no circumstance should potentially dangerous weapons be allowed onboard an aircraft,” said Patricia Friend, Association of Flight Attendants-CWA International President. “The devastating effects of 9/11 showed the world how a simple box cutter could become a deadly weapon in the hands of the wrong person. Flight attendants already have to be extra vigilant these days, and the fact that TSA wants them to contend with these hazardous objects is ridiculous. You can not take these objects to a sports complex, a museum, or a courthouse, you shouldn’t be allowed to bring them on an aircraft either.”

“It appears that TSA is setting up a false trade-off between a focus on detection of explosive devices and sharp objects. Such choices would not even be considered if the Bush Administration and Republicans in Congress stopped stretching thin the security screener resources at our nation’s airports. Flight attendants, who would be responsible for disarming a passenger wielding a currently prohibited item in the aisle of a plane, are firmly opposed to loosening these restrictions. The Bush Administration should listen to them and keep these potentially deadly objects off planes,” Rep. Markey concluded.

A copy of the letter sent from Rep. Markey to DHS Secretary Michael Chertoff urging DHS not to reverse its policy on prohibited carry-on objects such as scissors can be found at www.house.gov/markey.
